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Letter dated 10 January 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that the Government of Lebanon requests the Security Council to extend the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which expires on 31 January 2005, for an additional period of six months under Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978), both of 19 March 1978. The Government of Lebanon believes that UNIFIL still needs to continue its work in the south of Lebanon in order to complete the missions entrusted to it under these two resolutions, particularly the "restoration of international peace and security" in the region, as you indicated in your periodic reports to the Security Council and as Alain Pellegrini, UNIFIL Force Commander, stated on 16 December 2004.

The fact that Israel persists in its grave violations of the Blue Line by land, sea and air on a daily basis amounts to a constant attack against Lebanon's sovereignty, security and integrity and is in flagrant contravention of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). You rightly said that those violations were "provocative" and "unjustified" in paragraph 31 of your most recent report on UNIFIL (S/2004/572), submitted to the Security Council on 21 July 2004. The Security Council, in its resolution 1553 (2004), its latest resolution on UNIFIL, also highlighted those violations, characterizing them, in paragraph 7, as "continuing" violations "that could further escalate the tension" in the region.

Lebanon also wishes to mention that in 2000 the United Nations did not ensure Israeli withdrawal from all Lebanese territory to the internationally recognized boundaries as set forth in resolution 425 (1978), but rather to a de facto withdrawal line known as the "Blue Line", which Lebanon has respected until now, despite the fact that it previously registered and continues to uphold its reservation in that regard, especially in respect of three points on the Line which it considers as not matching the internationally recognized boundaries. Lebanon therefore reaffirms its legitimate right to them and demands that they be returned.

Lebanon wishes to maintain security and calm along the Blue Line and is working to spread stability and growth to the liberated regions. In this context, the Government of Lebanon organized municipal elections in mid-2004 throughout the south and in its formerly occupied villages. In your most recent report on UNIFIL (S/2004/572), you indicated that the entire region successfully took part in the elections and that the free exercise of the democratic process was a clear assertion

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of the exercise of authority by the Government of Lebanon. The monthly communications on the Middle East addressed to the Security Council by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Kieran Prendergast, more than once noted the measures taken by the Government of Lebanon to control the situation along the Blue Line.

In this context, Lebanon emphasizes that maintaining the UNIFIL mandate as provided in Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978), with the current level of troops, will constitute a reaffirmation of the international community's commitment to restoring the sovereignty of Lebanon over all its territory and the strong support for Lebanon's territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence within its internationally recognized boundaries evinced by the Security Council in its successive resolutions on the matter, the most recent of which is resolution 1553 (2004).

I take this opportunity to commend, on behalf of the Government of Lebanon, the efforts of the command and members of UNIFIL and the efforts and sacrifices made by the States participating in UNIFIL in carrying out the Force's mandate.

Lebanon greatly appreciates the efforts of donor States in that area. Inasmuch as it has become clear to the United Nations that there remain further maps and other documents indicating the locations of the mines left by the Israeli occupation in Lebanese territory, Lebanon calls on the Security Council to pressure Israel to hand over the rest of those documents. The mines continue to cause death and injuries to Lebanese civilians and curtail their freedom of action and movement. In addition, they hamper the movements of UNIFIL and interfere with the performance of its mission within its area of operation, endangering the lives of individuals working in UNIFIL and persons carrying out demining operations. Lebanon further calls on the Security Council to work to secure the release of all Lebanese unlawfully detained in Israeli prisons, in some cases for many years, in flagrant violation of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the protocols additional to those conventions.

Lebanon desires to reaffirm its commitment to the peace process in the Middle East aimed at the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the region based on international legitimacy, the Madrid Conference and the principle of land for peace and in accordance with the integrated Arab peace initiative unanimously adopted at the Beirut Summit on 28 March 2002 and approved by the Security Council.

The Government of Lebanon expresses to you its appreciation for your untiring efforts in support of the role of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

(*Signed*) Sami **Kronfol**
Permanent Representative